

**The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898.**

By EDGAR WICKBERG. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965. x, 280, Maps, Illustration, Appendices, Bibliography, Index. \$7.50.

In this meticulously documented and closely reasoned volume, Professor Edgar Wickberg has published a study of economic, cultural and social activities of the Philippine Chinese.

He suggests that the objective of this study "is to describe the economic and social position of the Chinese in the Philippines as of 1850-1898" (vii). Furthermore, he acknowledges the twofold purpose of the study to be "the exploration of a hitherto neglected phase in the development of the Philippine Chinese community" and the introduction of "unpublished materials from the Philippine National Archives" (viii-ix). He has achieved both objectives and opened the door to the "neglected phase" of the Philippine Chinese in the nineteenth century. Several questions and assumptions raised in the book will encourage scholars to undertake further study in examining this important national minority group.

The author deals with the Chinese position before 1850, the growth of Chinese activities in the Philippine economy, social contraction of the Chinese in the face of indigenous nationalism manifested in an anti-Chinese feeling, and the subsequent development of the overseas Chinese institutional ties with China.

Professor Wickberg has drawn a number of conclusions: the factor responsible for an increase in Chinese influx in the later nineteenth century was not the liberal immigration act of 1839. Rather, it was such economic factors as the opening of Philippine ports to world trade, Chinese access to the government's tax-collecting monopoly contracts, the founding of Hong Kong, and improved transportation facilities. He dismisses the less convincing contention of other scholars that a most-favored nation clause in the 1864 Sino-Spanish Treaty helped expand Chinese emigration. He also points out that, as trade opportunities with the West and China grew, the Philippine Chinese ceased to be retail dealers, distributors and artisans but became commercial agents, wholesalers, processors, and importer-exporters. In the process of their economic transformation, they developed

the credit systems and an economic organization known as the *cabecilla* system.

The author explains well the cultural and economic origins of an anti-Chinese sentiment and shows where such feeling was located. As for the origins of the Chinese as a national minority group, he has this to say: "The Chinese reacted to anti-Chinese pressure upon them as a group by withdrawing into communalism, stressing their 'Chineseness,' and once China showed an interest in them, becoming what the Spanish government believed them to be, a national minority group" (p. 167).

In Chapter 8, "The Philippine Chinese Look to China," Professor Wickberg discusses the factors—China's changing attitude toward the Chinese abroad, her economic interest in them, and Li Hung Chang's personal motive, coupled with the awareness of the Philippine Chinese of the need to establish a political relationship with China for protection—that resulted in the opening of the first Chinese consular service at Manila in 1891. One hastens to add, however, that the Ch'ing government's growing realization, as it entered into the community of nations in 1860-1880, of tangible advantages to be gained from consular service may account for the institutional ties with the Chinese compatriots.

The author makes the generalization that the Chinese were neither politically nor commercially committed, but opportunists (p. 202). My findings concerning *Nanyang* Chinese anti-Japanese national salvation and boycott movements (1908-1941) do not justify such a conclusion. The generalization is too tenuous to hold unless there is additional evidence not presented in this volume. The book is a solid piece of scholarship, utilizing sources in English, German, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese, a book that deserves serious attention.

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**Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal,**

1818-1835. By A. F. SALAHUDDIN AHMED. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965. x, 204, Appendices, Bibliography, Index. Guilders 28.

This is a valuable study of an important period in the life of modern Bengal. In it, Dr.